United Nations E/CONF.98/6/Add.1

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General

15 June 2007

Original: English

Ninth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names
New York, 21 - 30 August 2007
Item 15 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Features beyond a single sovereignty common to two or more nations

Endonym or Exonym – is there a Missing Term in Maritime Names?

Submitted by Israel**

* E/CONF.98/1

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Endonym or Exonym – is there a Missing Term in Maritime Names?

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Can different parts of a single maritime feature carry names of different terminological status? The problem dealt with here concerns toponyms in maritime regions which are not covered by any national jurisdiction such as international waters, open seas or extended economic zones (EEZs). The following remarks attempt to supply an answer to the opening question, in particular with reference to two maritime areas with contested toponyms, namely the Persian Gulf/Arabian Gulf and the Sea of Japan/East Sea.

History

The Persian Gulf is so named in most western maps and atlases, based on Ptolemy's 2nd cent. monumental work *Geographiki Yphigesis* or Guide to the description of the Earth, usually called Ptolemy's Geographia. And while the Latin name Sinus Arabicus (Arabian Gulf) in old maps often refers to the Red Sea, it was also applied to the body of water between Persia, present-day Iran, and the Arabian Peninsula. The Arab countries lying on the western and south-western side of this sea (and not only they) today call it al-Khalij al-'Arabi, the Arabian Gulf. But Iran demands the exclusive use of its own name, Khalij-e Fars, Persian Gulf. Incidently, John Bartholomew & Son, the well-known British cartographic firm, published in 1977, before the first Gulf War, two nearly-identical maps of the Gulf, one carrying the Persian name and the other the Arabic one – for good commercial reasons.

However, for terminological purposes the second example, being of much larger dimensions, is even more relevant.

The sea between the Japanese archipelago and the Peninsula of Korea is, today, named in most western maps and atlases Sea of Japan, a translation of the Japanese name Nihon Kai. Some 15 years ago the Republic of Korea, at the Sixth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, requested that the toponymy of this sea be changed, so that the Korean name, Tong Hae, i.e. East Sea, could be embodied in it. Japan objected to this proposal, and has been doing so ever since. The Sixth and the Seventh Conferences asked the two sides to consult together in order to find a solution acceptable to both – as yet without results. So this paper will concentrate on this East-Asian case.

The sea concerned, and certainly its central and major part, lies outside the territorial waters – however defined – of any one country. At first, in order to replace the name Sea of Japan by a single unbiased or non-aligned name acceptable to both sides, several neutral names were proposed such as Blue Sea, Sea of Peace, etc. This would have been in line with the principle of "one place – one name" applied e.g. by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names to its domestic toponymy. For a discussion of this principle see e.g. Kadmon (2000)[1] and UNGEGN (2006)[2]. Later, when none of

[1] "Why standardization? Who benefits from it?" in N. Kadmon, ***Toponymy – the lore, laws and language of Geographical Names*** (ISBN 0-533-13531-1), pp. 187-189, and "One place – one name", p. 190.
[2] United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), ***Manual for the National Standardization of Geographical Names*** (ISBN 92-1-161490-2), pp. 36 and 83.

these names was accepted by Japan, Korea's drive was directed towards a bilingual solution – namely, having this sea carry two names side-by-side, one Japanese and one Korean (or *vice versa*). There are, of course, many maritime areas around the world carrying two or more allonyms without any of the sides objecting to the other's. While Japan claimed that the name Sea of Japan is the preferred name worldwide, the Republic of Korea declaredthat the name Sea of Korea or East Sea enjoyed great antiquity. The Republic of Korea then turned to cartographic institutions worldwide, and this resulted in a not inconsiderable number of bilingual cases where the name East Sea appears in maps alongside the name Sea of Japan. This is a practical but not a formal solution.

Terminology and Cartography

The question now arises: what is – or would be – the terminological status of the two toponyms under consideration? Do they conform to the definitions in the *Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names*[3] ? Following are the reflections of the undersigned (who serves as editor of the *Glossary*), from a purely toponymic-terminological and cartographic viewpoint.

(i) According to the Law of the Sea (1982, 1994) "....jurisdiction refers to the power of a state to affect persons, property and **circumstances** within its territory", which includes its maritime zones. Over those parts of the sea which come under the definition of territorial waters, the respective states have authority of conferring maritime names – which comes under the term "circumstances" mentioned above. These names are then endonyms – and if ratified by a national authority, even official endonyms.

(ii) Areas lying outside their territorial waters (and not covered by any national jurisdiction) can carry any name applied to them by different linguistic or political communities such as different countries. By "carrying" a name is meant its being used on the one hand in written verbal documents, such as in literature and particularly in geographical gazetteers and indexes, and on the other hand in maps and maritime charts. None of these names can be regarded as an endonym, an endonym being defined by the *Glossary of terms for the standardization of geographical names* (term No. 076) as "name of a geographical feature in one of the **languages occurring** in that area where the feature is situated". No language can be said to "occur" in the high seas. However, after defining what they are not, the different names applied by different countries are allonyms (term No. 005): alternative (and taxonomically undefined) names for a single geographical entity.

(iii) Any country can apply its own preferred names even on geographical items (in the present case – maritime features) which are covered by the jurisdiction of another country, e.g. in that country's territorial waters. Such a name will then be defined as an exonym. In the *Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names* this was defined by term No. 081. In a joint session of the UNGEGN Working Groups on Terminology and Exonyms in 2006, it was decided to amend the definition as follows (and this will be submittedfor ratification to the 9th United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names): name used in a specific language for a geographical feature situated outside the area where that language is spoken, and differing in its form from the name used in an official or well-established language of the area where the

[3] United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, ***Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names***. United Nations, New York, 2002 (ISBN 92-1-061192-6).

geographical feature is situated. *Examples*: Mailand is the German exonym for Milano (Italian); Jerusalen is the Spanish exonym for Yerushalayim (Hebrew); Lake Constance is the English exonym for Bodensee (German); and Tong Hae (East Sea) would be a Korean exonym for the territorial waters of Japan, as would be the name Sea of Japan for Korean territorial waters. Similarly, Persian Gulf would be a Persian exonym for the territorial waters of the Arab countries, and, *vice versa*, Arabian Gulf an Arabic exonym for those of Iran.

Definitions

The names which are the subject of the present paper can thus be classified and defined as follows.

1.1 The name Nihon Kai or Sea of Japan is an(official?) maritime name within those waters that are regarded by the international community as coming under Japan's jurisdiction.
1.2 The terminological status of the toponym Sea of Japan as applied to the international parts of this body of water (the "high sea") is still undefined (see below). But no objection on formal grounds can be validly raised against this name.
1.3 The use of the name Sea of Japan in respect of the territorial waters of the Republic of Korea generates a Japanese exonym.

Now, to the opposite , western side of this sea:

2.1 The name Tong Hae or East Sea is an (official?) maritime name in respect of the territorial waters of the Republic of Korea.
2.2 The terminological status of the toponym East Sea as applied to the international parts of this sea (the "high sea"), is still undefined. But here, too, no valid objection on formal grounds can be raised against the use of this name.
2.3 The use of the name East Sea if referring to the territorial waters of Japan constitutes a Korean exonym.

The same is true, respectively, of the names Persian/Arabian Gulf.

It should be pointed out that it is common practice, by any particular country or map producer, to cover in its small-scale maps the territorial waters of any other country or countries under its general name for the sea of which these territorial waters are a part, and thus in theory generating exonyms. One example out of many would be the Swedish name Östersjön for the different names of the Baltic Sea applied by the countries bordering it, whose territorial-waters endonyms then become Swedish exonyms.

Summing up:

(a) Concerning the international waters or "high seas", both names Sea of Japan and East Sea are neither endonyms nor exonyms. So are Persian Gulf and Arabian Gulf (unless the territorial waters of both sides meet in mid-Gulf). Both pairs are allonyms undefined from a terminological point of view, and they have equal status.

(b) The names Sea of Japan and East Sea, and Persian/Arabian Gulf, if applied to or covering the territorial waters of the opposite side, constitute exonyms. This can also be expressed in a different form: if and where these names cover (for example in charts and maps) the entire sea, they constitute exonyms where the y cover territorial waters of the opposing side. In maps of relatively small scale, they will usually not be separately indicated or named

In conclusion: Any country and any cartographic institution can employ either, and preferably both names, to the "high" or international areas of the sea under discussion.

Finally, from the above discussion it follows that there is a need for a new term to be added to the *Glossary of terms for the standardization of geographical names*, namely the status of a toponym for a maritime feature in international waters. It also seems that the term univocity used in the UNGEGN Manual (see above) for the "one place – one name" principle is a misnomer, because univocity (from Latin vox, voice) means "having only one meaning"[4] . A suitable proposal for amendment to the *Glossary of Terms* is being presented to UNGEGN's Working Group on Toponymic Terminology.

Summary

There are cases of names contested by two or more nations for parts of the open seas or international waters (whose names cannot, *senso stricto*, be defined formally as either endonyms or exonyms as explained in the paper). Such maritime names require a separate definition. The paper investigates two such name-pairs, viz. Sea of Japan/East Sea and Persian/Arabian Gulf , analysing their status from a terminological viewpoint and coming to the conclusion that a new term is required to taxonomically define them. A suitable proposal is being presented to the working group on toponymic terminology.

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[4] See e.g. ***Webster's New International Dictionary***, "univocal" and "univocity".